

# FACTSHEET- Alcohol-related crime

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

*‘Alcohol-related’ crime*: offences generated or committed within the context of the sale and consumption of alcohol.

When alcohol is seen to have had a causal role in an offence, it is integral to how the offender is managed and the sentencing or treatment programme proposed by the court.

The following factsheet focuses on alcohol-related *crimes* rather than milder drunk and disorderly behaviour.

**2. KEY FACTS**

**The Problem<sup>i</sup>**

- 1.2m violent incidents (1999) *or* around half of all violent crimes
- 360,000 incidents of domestic violence - a third - are linked to alcohol misuse.
- 80,000 arrests for drunkenness and disorder
- 530 drink-driving deaths
- Alcohol misuse is linked to disorder: 26% of people thought that being drunk or rowdy in public places was a big or fairly big problem in their area in 2008/9, (up from 19% in 2004).<sup>ii</sup>
- 61% of the population perceive alcohol-related violence as worsening<sup>iii</sup>
- In 2004 there were 34,619 drunken offences in England and Wales; in 1996, the figure was 50,132.
- One UK study found that 58% of rapists reported drinking beforehand and alcohol is a key factor in child and elder abuse.
- Many victims of alcohol-related violence have also been drinking, and often share similar profiles to offenders
- Incidents of violence in or around licensed premises in England and Wales totaled 52,205 in 2003/4, with Lancashire and Devon and Cornwall the Police Force Areas with the two highest rates, at 3,910 and 3,580 respectively.<sup>iv</sup>

Persons found guilty or cautioned for offences of drunkenness by sex in England and Wales<sup>v</sup>

Year: 2005	Found guilty	Cautioned	Found guilty or cautioned
<b>All persons</b>	<b>16,068</b>	<b>8,589</b>	<b>24,657</b>
Male	13,927	6,301	20,228
Female	2,141	2,288	4,429
Total / 100,000			56
Males			95
Females			20

Alcohol-related crime features prominently in over 70% of Crime and Disorder Strategies<sup>vi</sup> and from approximately 10.30pm to 3.00am every day the majority of arrests are for alcohol-related offences.<sup>vii</sup>

However, the large majority of those abusing alcohol are unlikely to have much contact with the Criminal Justice System.

### **The Cost<sup>viii</sup>**

- The overall annual cost of crime and anti-social behaviour linked to alcohol misuse is estimated at £8-£13bn a year.<sup>ix</sup> In 2004, the approximate figure was £7.3bn.
- Cost to Criminal Justice System £1.8bn
- Cost to services as consequence of alcohol-related crime £3.5bn
- Cost to services in anticipation of alcohol-related crime £1.5bn
- Human costs of alcohol-related crime £4.7bn

### *Police-NHS*

Public debate on alcohol revolves largely around the costs of alcohol-related crime, yet the brunt of its costs are borne by the NHS and these have escalated exponentially. In 2001, the NHS spent around £1bn treating alcohol-related conditions, £1.7bn in 2004 and £2.7bn in 2007. The rate of alcohol-related hospital admissions is increasing by 70,000 every year.<sup>x</sup>

## **3. DETAIL**

The UK's per capita consumption of alcohol rose 19% between 1980 and 2007, compared with a 13% decline for all 30 countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.<sup>xi</sup>

### **(i) Alcohol and Prisons<sup>xii</sup>**

- Approximately 20% of alcohol-related arrestees have four or more previous convictions.
- There are currently eight referral schemes with a specific focus on alcohol: some of these are based on arrest and others on bail conditions.
- These have not been systematically evaluated, but available management statistics suggest that one such scheme reduced re-offending by up to half.
- Problems with alcohol are widespread in prison. In the year before conviction, 63% of sentenced male prisoners and 39% of sentenced female prisoners reported "hazardous" drinking.
- Intoxicated arrestees require checking every fifteen minutes: in 2001-02, there were 16 deaths in police custody involving the misuse of alcohol.
- Detoxification is available on reception in all local and remand prisons: during 2002-3 around 6,400 prisoners received alcohol detoxification and 7,000 combined drug and alcohol detoxification;
- Alcoholics Anonymous run services in around 50% of prisons

- Alcohol-related offending is also a significant issue for the Probation Service. Evidence from the pilots of the Prison and Probation Services’ joint Offender Assessment System (OASys) found that, of those assessed, alcohol was a criminogenic need (directly linked to criminal behaviour) for 35% of offenders and a disinhibitor for 37%.

**(ii) British Crime Survey findings, 2008/09<sup>xiii</sup>**

Victims believed the offender(s) to be under the influence of alcohol in nearly half (47%) of all violent incidents. This was most frequent in incidents of stranger violence (62%).

In nearly one in five (17%) incidents the victim believed the offender(s) to be under the influence of drugs.

There were 973,000 violent incidents where the victim believed the offender(s) to be under the influence of alcohol and 334,000 incidents where the victim perceived the offender(s) to be under the influence of drugs.

There is no statistically significant change in the number of alcohol-related and drug-related violent incidents levels between 2007/08 and 2008/09. Longer-term trends show there have been significant decreases since 1995 in the number of violent incidents believed by victims to involve offender(s) under the influence of either alcohol or drugs. This is in the context of the overall fall in the number of violent crimes. The proportion of alcohol-related incidents has increased over this period and the proportion of drug-related incidents has remained relatively stable.

Table: Proportion of violent incidents where the victim believed the offender(s) to be under the influence of alcohol and drugs<sup>xiv</sup>

<i>(All values percentages from BCS 2008/9)</i>	Offence Type					Violence type			
	All violence	Wounding	Assault with minor injury	Assault without injury	Robbery	Domestic	Acquaintance	Stranger	Mugging (robbery and snatch theft)
<b>Offender(s) perceived to be under the influence of alcohol</b>									
Yes	47	51	57	46	25	38	41	62	20
No	43	37	39	46	58	60	51	27	56

Don't Know	9	12	5	8	18	2	8	10	25
<b>Offender(s) perceived to be under the influence of drugs</b>									
Yes	17	20	12	16	24	16	16	16	20
No	53	46	64	56	35	81	63	42	36
Don't Know	30	34	24	28	41	3	22	43	44
(Unweighted base)	(1,449)	(345)	(357)	(556)	(191)	(217)	(484)	(553)	(256)

Nature of crimes experienced by those who perceive people being drunk or rowdy to be a problem in their local area

<i>Type of behaviour experienced</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Fighting within or between groups	37
Violence/people being assaulted by drunks	23
Drink-related theft or vandalism	22

### **Causes and impacts of crime according to the BCS**

In line with findings from previous years, the 2008/09 BCS shows that drugs and lack of discipline from parents were the two factors most commonly identified as one of the major causes of crime in Britain today (68% and 67% respectively).

- When people were asked which single factor they believed was the main cause of crime, three out of ten (30%) said lack of discipline from parents,
- One in four (26%) people thought drugs were the main cause.
- More than half (53%) thought that alcohol was one of the major causes of crime,
- A much smaller proportion (8%) thought alcohol was the main cause of crime in Britain today.
- 11% of people claimed that 'too lenient sentencing' was the main cause of crime.

### **(iii) Focus: Youth Offenders and Alcohol<sup>xv</sup>**

Prevalence of offending:

While studies suggest that frequency of drinking is strongly associated with offending, these findings do not provide evidence of a causal relationship between drinking and offending. A similar pattern is found for all offence types: 10- to 17-year-olds who drink at least once a week commit more offences than those who drink less frequently or not at all.

Violent offending was high among those who drank one to three times a month (26% report that they have committed a violent offence in the previous 12 months) and even higher among

those who drank at least once a week (39%). Among those who had not drunk alcohol in the past 12 months the figure was much lower at 11%.

Those who drank at least once a week also reported committing more drug-related offences than those who had not drunk alcohol in the past 12 months or at all (10% vs. <1%). Reports of criminal damage (17%) and theft (34%) were also higher among those who drank at least once a week in comparison to those who drank less frequently or not at all. Among those who drank at least once a week, boys reported committing significantly more offences than girls, with the exception of drug offences (which had a similar rate across the sexes).

Table: Proportion of offences, offenders and sample aged 10-17 accounted for by drinking patterns<sup>xvi</sup>

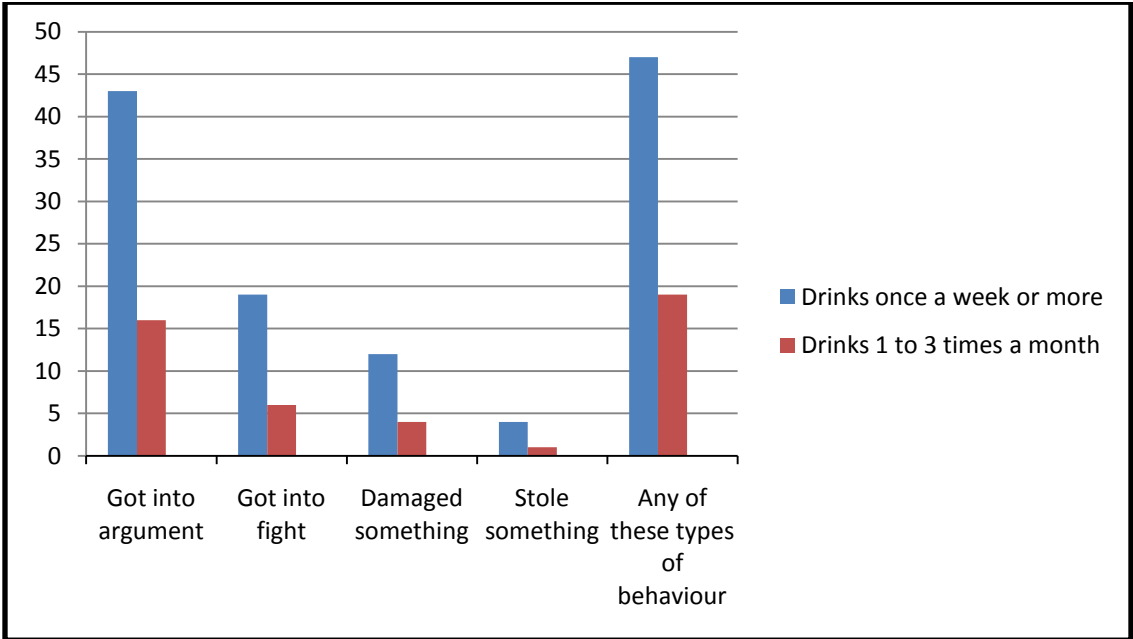
	All offences			Violent offences		
	% of offences	% of offenders	% of sample	% of offences	% of offenders	% of sample
Once a week or more	37	28	14	34	29	15
1 to 3 times a month	34	27	18	32	24	18
Less often	13	20	22	13	20	22
Not drunk in the past 12 months/never drink alcohol	16	25	45	20	26	45
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table: Persons found guilty or cautioned for offences involving underage drinking under the Licensing Act 1964<sup>xvii</sup>

Year	<i>Persons under 18 buying intoxicating liquor</i>			<i>Selling intoxicating liquor to persons under 18</i>		
	Found guilty	Cautioned	Found guilty or cautioned	Found guilty	Cautioned	Found guilty or cautioned
2005	15	21	36	744	97	841

The 2004 Offending Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS) also asked respondents who reported drinking alcohol at least once a month about criminal and disorderly behaviour committed during or after the consumption of alcohol.

Chart: Criminal and disorderly behaviour during or after drinking in previous 12 months amongst 10 to 17-year-olds who drank at least once a month<sup>xviii</sup>



**Other types of risky behaviour:**

Those 10- to 17-year olds who had drunk alcohol, particularly those who drank at least once a week, were more likely to smoke and take drugs. This finding is in line with previous research on school-aged children.<sup>xix</sup>

- More than one-quarter (28%) of those who drank at least once a week had taken drugs in the past month.
- This is in comparison to only 8% of those who drank one to three times a month, 3% who drank less than once a month and less than 1% of those who had not drunk alcohol in the previous year.
- Of those who drank at least once a week, 43% reported that they smoked regularly compared to only 2% of non-drinkers.<sup>xx</sup>

**4. CASE STUDIES:** Approaches to tackling alcohol-related crime and disorder

Many UK cities could have been chosen as examples for study. A Home Office report on alcohol-related schemes within Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, highlights how 92% of Burnley’s violent crime is committed in and around licensed premises.<sup>xxi</sup> An Institute of Alcohol Studies factsheet mentions Bath, whose night-club district has seven times the amount of violent crime of the district average and forty times the amount of criminal damage per km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>xxii</sup>

**Cardiff**<sup>xxiii</sup>

Here, police and city officials have set up a “traffic-light” system for cracking down on pub violence. They tally assaults and other disturbances at each bar and assign points for each incident. If a pub or club accumulates a certain number of points over a six-month period it enters a “red” zone and police assign it a plan for improvement, including switching to plastic cups and adding certain closed-circuit television cameras and bouncers. Pubs that don’t comply or that fail to improve could lose their liquor licences. Police say this scheme coupled with better pub management has helped cut alcohol-related crime in Cardiff establishments from 2,442 incidents in 2006 to 1,552 in 2008. However, they acknowledge that rates of alcohol-related violence on the streets in general aren’t improving.

**5. MEASURES TAKEN**

The consequences of failing to behave responsibly are already dealt with in a number of ways:

- Under the **1902 Licensing Act**, any individual who has been convicted of offences related to drunkenness three times within the preceding twelve months can be banned by the courts from buying alcohol from any licensed premise for three years;

It is an offence to be drunk and disorderly and/or drunk and incapable:

- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (**ABCs**) and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (**ASBOs**) are civil orders which aim to protect the community from behaviour which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to others, and can be clearly linked to alcohol misuse. For example, they can prevent an individual associating with other people with whom they commit anti-social behaviour. Breach is a criminal offence with a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment and/or a fine.
- **Conditional cautioning** can be used to deal with alcohol-related offenders. Certain offenders might, for example, be required to keep away from local pubs for three months and referred to treatment as well, if appropriate.
- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (**ASBOs**) can be used to prohibit people from anti-social acts related to alcohol – for example, by prohibiting them from entering specified pubs/areas, consuming alcohol in public or associating with persons with whom they behave anti-socially. In addition, orders to prohibit anti-social behaviour can be made when an individual is convicted of a criminal offence.
- **Penalty notices**: this recent initiative was designed to help the police to address alcohol-related crime without having to report back to the police station to fill out paperwork. The penalty notice carries a fine of between £30 and £80.
- A cross-governmental approach was put into place beginning from Q4 2004\*. The Prison Service introduced an Alcohol Strategy for prisoners from Spring 2004.
- From 1st April 2010, the Government introduced a **Drinking Banning Orders** in 25 areas.<sup>xxiv</sup> These allow magistrates to ban or prevent an individual who has committed a crime under the influence of alcohol from entering any premises that sell alcohol.
- **Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)** - there are 376 in England and Wales.<sup>xxv</sup> Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, every three years all CDRPs are required

to conduct and publish an audit of crime and disorder in their area. The audit document helps partnerships identify their most pressing problems by collecting and analysing a range of crime and disorder data. Almost all audit documents (97%) mentioned alcohol in some form.

### ***\*The National Alcohol Strategy***

#### **Police and Prisons**

- Government should consult with the police on how best to raise the priority given to dealing with alcohol-related crime and disorder. The measures outlined in the strategy and the provisions in the Licensing Act are designed to reduce problems, freeing up police time to pre-empt trouble spots and make more use of deterrent policing; and ensure that officers are fully aware of current powers, on how and when to bring prosecutions and on seeking and making a case for reviewing existing licences and objecting to new ones where appropriate.
- Within existing resources, there will be a new prison rule to allow alcohol testing at the discretion of the governor; and a treatment/interventions good practice guide which sets out a model treatment framework.

#### **Alcohol-related crime and disorder**

The strategy proposes a series of measures to address the problems of those town and city centres that are blighted by alcohol misuse at weekends. These include:

- greater use of exclusion orders to ban those causing trouble from pubs and clubs or entire town centres;
- greater use of the new fixed-penalty fines for anti-social behaviour where alcohol is an aggravating factor
- working with licensees to ensure better enforcement of existing rules on under-age

## **6. ANALYSIS**

### **Alcohol-related crime is under control**

- A Portman Group report concluded that 'there is no evidence that alcohol is a major factor in crime and no general link between alcohol and crime has been found'.<sup>xxvi</sup>
- Similarly, a Home Office report also stated that 'there is no evidence that various types of crime are actually caused by alcohol consumption'.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- Some programmes for offenders already address some of the underlying criminogenic factors associated with alcohol-related offending: for prisoners whose alcohol misuse is part of poly-drug misuse, CARAT (Coordinating, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare) provides a low-level intervention that creates a care plan based on the specific needs of the prisoner; and new funds under the 2002 Spending Review are dedicated to improving drug and alcohol service provision and resettlement planning for juveniles in custody, led by the Youth Justice Board in partnership with the Prison Service, Secure Training Centres and local authority Securer Children's Homes.

- The introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices means that enforcing legislation on drunk and disorderly behaviour ease the burden upon police of arresting large numbers.
- The Institute of Alcohol Studies say that in relation to individual offences alcohol is best regarded as being one link in the causal chain rather than the sole operating cause.
- There are difficulties in obtaining reliable, or indeed any, statistics relating to offences such as breach of the peace because policies in regard to prosecutions are particularly variable from one area to another and secondly, because a record of such offences is not centrally collated.

### **Alcohol-related crime is a major problem**

- In launching the Government's Action Plan in August 2000, Home Office Minister Charles Clarke admitted that serious problems of disorderly conduct, nuisance, criminal damage and alcohol-related assaults were prominent 'particularly in the proximity of licensed premises at closing time'.
- International evidence supports the claim that alcohol is a major factor in many kinds of crime, as well as contributing to a range of social problems.
- The results presented in the previous section suggest a strong association between drinking alcohol and offending, but they do not directly link drinking and offending behaviour in time.
- There appears to be a correlation between heavy drinking in youth and a spiral of criminal behaviour.
- Repeat offending is a big problem and some offenders require extensive specialised alcohol treatment and other support.
- But this doesn't apply to all offenders, so availability of a range of interventions is crucial.
- Enforcement of legislation on drunk and disorderly behaviour has dropped sharply over the last 10 years. This reflects not only falling priority but also, crucially, the sheer practicalities of policing large numbers of drunk people. Arresting someone for drunk and disorderly behaviour and taking them to the custody suite can take two hours or more, during which the officer is effectively off the streets. If charged and convicted, average fines are around £100.

**Gaps in research:** It can only remain a matter of conjecture whether or not the problem is under control because there have been no studies yielding results of statistical significance to show what type of person is most prone to engaging in alcohol-related crime. To what extent is alcohol-related crime attributable to those with already dysfunctional lives, with a propensity to problematic behaviours, rather than apparently non-dysfunctional 'normal' people engaging in criminal acts when intoxicated?

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>i</sup> All statistics from this source, unless referenced otherwise. *Alcohol Reduction Strategy for England*, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2004. <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Society/documents/2004/03/15/alcoholstrategy.pdf>
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- <sup>v</sup> Home Office Statistics Bulletin 19/06, Criminal Statistics 2005
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- <sup>ix</sup> Home Office, 2010. <http://www.cjp.org.uk/news/archive/government-reveals-tough-new-powers-to-tackle-alcohol-crime-19-01-2010/>
- <sup>x</sup> <http://www.norfolk.nhs.uk/news/2009/oct/Diary-date-for-alcohol-awareness-week.html>
- <sup>xi</sup> Wall Street Journal Online: [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704588404575123691166554882.html?mod=rss\\_whats\\_news\\_us&utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+wsj%2Fxml%2Frss%2F3\\_7011+%28WSJ.com%3A+What%27s+News+US%29&utm\\_content=Google+Reader](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704588404575123691166554882.html?mod=rss_whats_news_us&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+wsj%2Fxml%2Frss%2F3_7011+%28WSJ.com%3A+What%27s+News+US%29&utm_content=Google+Reader)
- <sup>xii</sup> All statistics in this section from this source, unless referenced otherwise. *Alcohol Reduction Strategy for England*, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2004. <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Society/documents/2004/03/15/alcoholstrategy.pdf>
- <sup>xiii</sup> British Crime Survey 2008/9 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1109vol1.pdf>
- <sup>xiv</sup> British Crime Survey 2008/9 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1109vol1.pdf>
- <sup>xv</sup> Underage drinking: findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey, Home Office, 2006. <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/r277.pdf>
- <sup>xvi</sup> Table 3 and Figure 2, Home Office: Underage Drinking, Findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/r277.pdf>
- <sup>xvii</sup> [http://www.ias.org.uk/resources/factsheets/crime\\_disorder.pdf](http://www.ias.org.uk/resources/factsheets/crime_disorder.pdf)
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- <sup>xxiii</sup> Wall Street Journal Online [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704588404575123691166554882.html?mod=rss\\_whats\\_news\\_us&utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+wsj%2Fxml%2Frss%2F3\\_7011+%28WSJ.com%3A+What%27s+News+US%29&utm\\_content=Google+Reader](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704588404575123691166554882.html?mod=rss_whats_news_us&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+wsj%2Fxml%2Frss%2F3_7011+%28WSJ.com%3A+What%27s+News+US%29&utm_content=Google+Reader)
- <sup>xxiv</sup> BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8604571.stm>

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<sup>xxv</sup> Home Office: Alcohol Audits, Strategies and Initiatives 2004.  
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<sup>xxvii</sup> Ibid.